

Student Support

What is Anxiety?



Anxiety is a word used to describe feelings of unease, worry and fear. It can make a person feel emotionally and physically unwell



HEDDINGHAM SCHOOL
STUDENT SUPPORT

Becoming anxious is a normal human experience, but if your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time, it can be overwhelming

Fight or Flight?

Like other animals, human beings have evolved ways to help us protect ourselves from dangerous, life threatening situations. When you feel under threat, your body releases hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol, which help physically prepare you to either fight the danger or run away from it. These hormones can:

Make you feel more alert so you can act faster;

Make your heart beat faster to carry blood quickly to where it is needed most.

Then when the danger has passed, your body releases other hormones to help your muscles relax which may cause you to shake. This is commonly called the 'fight or flight' response – it's something that happens automatically in our bodies and we have no control over it.

In modern society, we don't usually face situations where we need to physically fight or flee from danger but our biological response to feeling threatened is the same.

What Causes Anxiety?

It is hard to know why some people experience anxiety. If you worry more than others, it could just be part of your personality.

How Can I Help Manage My Anxiety?

A common – and natural – response to anxiety is to avoid what triggers your fears so taking any action might make you feel more anxious at first. There are many things you can do to help yourself cope.

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A common – and natural – response to anxiety is to avoid what triggers your fears so taking any action might make you feel more anxious at first. There are many things you can do to help yourself cope of social media. Look at their school timetable with them. Are there any adjustments the school could make? Listen to their views and remind them that you are there to listen even if they do not know why they become anxious.

Talk to Someone you Trust

It may be that just having someone listen to you and showing they care can help in itself.

Try a Breathing Exercise

Gently breath in through your nose and out through your mouth, keeping the pace slow and regular. Slowly tense then relax all the muscles in your body starting at your toes and working up to your head. Afterwards, just take some time to be still and focus on how your body feels.

Try Shifting your Focus

You may find it helpful to shift your focus or distract yourself from the anxiety that you are feeling.

Look at a flower, a picture or something that you find interesting or comforting. Really notice the details, the colours and any smells or sounds.

Listening to Music

Listening to calm music can relax you. Try some 'chill out music' on YouTube.

Try Reassuring Yourself

We all have an inner voice. We all talk to ourselves throughout the day. Try using your self-talk to tell yourself that the symptoms you experience are actually caused by anxiety – it is not really dangerous and it will pass. This can help you feel calmer and less fearful of future attacks.

Physical Exercise

You may find that physical exercise can help you manage anxiety and panic attacks. Going for a walk or a run can help you get some time to yourself to think things over away from the stresses of the day.

Keep a Diary

You may find keeping a **Worry Journal** each time that you get anxious can help you spot patterns in what triggers these experiences for you so you can discuss with someone and think about how you can deal with these situations in the future.

You may also keep a note of when you manage your anxiety successful. This might help you feel more in control of the anxiety you feel.

Eating a Healthy Diet

You may find it easier to relax if you avoid stimulants such as coffee. A healthy diet will make you feel physically better.

Re-frame Your Anxiety

Anxiety can be reframed as excitement, being on the edge of newness or just growth of yourself as a human being. Note your negative thought habits in your Worry Journal. Reframe negative thoughts and think about them in the here and now. How will you cope with them next time they occur?

Where I Can Find Additional Help?

Useful websites: You can find advice by setting up an account on www.kooth.com There is a team of counsellors available to speak to young people on-line. You can also find useful advice there.

Young Minds:

youngminds.org.uk

Mind – The Mental Health Charity:

www.mind.org.uk

Try downloading this app:

The free Get Connected app Headspace

Mindfulness techniques have benefits for mood, attention and general coping skills for the ups and downs of life. This simple app gives you ten short meditations, four brief videos explaining what meditation is and a series of facts and questions.

Keep track of how many of the meditations you have listened to and try ten minutes a day for ten days. This website is good too –

www.getsomeheadspace.com

MindShift

This is a good app if you are feeling anxious. It will explain what anxiety is and some helpful strategies to try and tackle your anxiety.

Calm

This is another free app which is based around meditation.

Self talk is the most powerful form of communication because it either empowers you or it defeats you.

